

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5296

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUESSELS

USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUXEMBOURG 0689

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, LU, EEC

SUBJ: VICE PRESIDENT/MINISTER OF FINANCE RAYMOND VOUEL TO BE NAMED
MEMBER OF THE EC COMMISSION IN BRUSSELS

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:ON JULY 3 GOL ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO
NOMINATE MR. RAYMOND VOUEL TO SUCCEED MR. ALBERT BORSCHETTE AS
A MEMBER OF THE EEC COMMISSION. MR. BORSCHETTE HAS BEEN
SERIOUSLY ILL FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, AND THERE IS LITTLE HOPE
OF RECOVERY. ANNOUNCEMENT INDICATED ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS
OF DECLARING MR. BORSCHETTE INCAPACITATED AND OF PROPOSING
VOUEL'S CANDIDACY WOULD BEGIN IMMEDIATELY.

2. AT THE SAME TIME, PRIME MINISTER THORN ANNOUNCED HE WOULD LEAVE
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TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY (POSL) THE CHOICE OF A SUCCESSOR TO

VOUEL IN THE DEMOCRAT/SOCIALIST COALITION GOVERNMENT. THE POSL WILL DESIGNATE A REPLACEMENT AT A PARTY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING ON JULY 21. THE TWO FRONT RUNNERS FOR THE POST ARE PRESENTLY MR. JACQUES POOS, A SOCIALIST DEPUTY AND EDITOR OF THE SOCIALIST DAILY NEWSPAPER, THE TAGEBLATT, AND MR. RAYMOND KIRSCH, THE RANKING CIVIL SERVANT AT THE FINANCE MINISTRY WHO IS ALSO ACTIVE IN THE POSL.

3. RAYMOND VOUEL WAS BORN APRIL 8, 1923 IN RUMELANGE, LUXEMBOURG. HE HAD BARELY FINISHED HIS STUDIES AT THE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL OF ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE WHEN HE WAS FORCIBLY CONSCRIPTED INTO THE GERMAN ARMY. HE ESCAPED AND JOINED THE RESISTANCE IN FRANCE, AND DURING THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE ACTED AS INTERPRETER FOR THE AMERICAN ARMY. HE CONTINUED TO WORK FOR THE AMERICAN MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN GERMANY AS AN INTERPRETER UNTIL 1946. HE NEVER RETURNED FOR UNIVERSITY STUDIES, BUT BECAME A JOURNALIST FOR THE SOCIALIST DAILY TAGEBLATT, EDITING AND REPORTING ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS UNTIL 1953. IN THAT YEAR HE BECAME ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MUNICIPAL HOSPITAL OF ESCH. IN 1963 HE BECAME AN ESCH MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR AND IN 1964 WAS ELECTED TO THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES ON THE SOCIALIST TICKET. HE SERVED AS STATE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, LABOR, SOCIAL SECURITY AND MINES UNTIL 1968. WHILE RETAINING HIS SEAT IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AFTER 1968, AND SERVING AS PRESIDENT OF THE POSL PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FROM 1969 UNTIL 1974, HE WORKED AS AN EXECUTIVE IN A LARGE INSURANCE FIRM DURING THAT SAME PERIOD. HE SPEAKS FLUENT ENGLISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN. VOUEL RECENTLY MARRIED THE FORMER LEONIDE KRIEGER AND HAS ONE DAUGHTER.

END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: VOUEL'S NOMINATION TO A COMMISSION POST HAS BEEN RUMORED FOR SOME TIME. IT WAS MOST RECENTLY FORESHADOWED BY HIS FAILURE TO RUN FOR SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SOCIALIST PART AT THE POSL'S JUNE 20 CONFERENCE (SEE LUXEMBOURG A-18). ALTHOUGH A COMPETENT ADMINISTRATOR WITH A GOOD BACKGROUND IN ECONOMICS, VOUEL'S ABRASIVENESS AND PERSONALITY QUERKS WERE A SOURCE

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OF SERIOUS DIFFICULTY WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND WITHIN VOUEL'S OWN PARTY. RELATIONS HAD BECOME SO STRAINED WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS THAT SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE COALITION GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE SPLIT HAD VOUEL STAYED ON AS VICE PRESIDENT. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT VOUEL RECOGNIZED THIS AND OPTED FOR THE PRESTIGE AND FINANCIAL SECURITY OF THE COMMISSION, TO THE GREAT RELIEF OF PRIME MINISTER THORN.

5. BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH: RAYMOND VOUEL HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY SINCE 1953, AND EMERGED AS THE DE FACTO--BUT NOT UNCONTESTED--LEADER OF THE PARTY AFTER ITS UNEXPECTED ELECTORAL VICTORY IN 1974. WIDELY RESPECTED FOR HIS INTELLIGENCE AND HARD WORK, HE IS RAELY LIKE BY ASSOCIATES AND HAS FEW CLOSE PERSONAL FRIENDS. TENSE, WITHDRAWN, SUSPICIOUS AND EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO CRITICISM, VOUEL IS ESSENTIALLY A PRIVATE PERSON WHO HAS SUFFERED PERSONAL TRAGEDY (INCLUDING DIVORCE AND THE DEATH OF AN INFANT SON) AND WHO APPEARS UNSURE OF HIMSELF DESPITE HIS TECHNICAL ABILITIES. THIS MAY BE YRELATED TO A TRAUMATIC PERSONAL EXPERIENCE HE HAD WHEN HE LEFT AN EARLIER GOVERNMENT IN 1968 AND HAD DIFFICULTY IN FINDING A JOB. HE ENDED UP AS AN EXECUTIVE WITH AN INSURANCE FIRM BUT ONLY AFTER A LONG AND DIFFICULT PERIOD OF JOB INTERVIEWS AND TURNDOWNS. FOR THIS REASON HE PUTS AN EXTREMELY HIGH VALUE ON FINACIAL SECURITY.

--VOUEL IS CAPABLE OF SHARP AND SOMETIMES DOGMATIC CRITICISM OF WHAT HE CONSIDERS "REACTIONARY" U.S. POLICIES AND SOMETIMES SEEMS TO VIEW U.S. ACTIONS THROUGH A DISTORTING LENS OF IDEOLOGICAL PREJUDICE. NEVER-THELESS, HE IS FUNDAMENTALLY WELL DISPOSED TOWARD THE U.S. AND HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO ATTENTIO (OR THE LACK OF IT) FROM AMERICAN OFFICIALS.

--VOUEL CLAIMS HIS ECONOMIC PRAGMATISM WILL ALWAYS PREVAIL OVER HIS SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY WHEN THE TWO ARE IN CONFLICT, AND SO FAR THIS HAS GENERALLY BEEN TRUE OF HIS CONDUCT WITHIN THE COALITION CABINET. HOWEVER, HIS PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH THE DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF THE CABINET HAVE BEEN STORMY AND SUSPICIOUS. VOUEL HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LONER AND HARD WORKER WHO HAS DIFFICULTY DELEGATING

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